

fiercely and bravely. Halina was assigned to duties as a messenger, nurse, and guard. During the resistance, her foot and arm were severely injured by German shells. However, rather than succumbing to her injuries, Halina bandaged herself and returned to her unit. Several times, she and her comrades escaped enemy troops by crawling through sewers and fighting off rats.

Despite their courageous efforts, the Home Army eventually ran out of food, medicine, and ammunition. The Germans captured Halina and her unit and sent them to concentration camps in Germany.

The resistance engaged the German occupiers for 63 days of intense fighting—the longest Polish resistance battle fought during World War II. In addition to its length, the Warsaw Uprising was the greatest military operation undertaken by any resistance movement in Europe at the time. It was an amazing act of courage and overwhelming valor. When it was over, more than 200,000 Polish people had lost their lives fighting for their freedom.

Halina survived the War. She survived the ghetto, the resistance, and a German concentration camp. Throughout this, she also managed to find the love of her life—George Grabowski. They married in England in 1948 after they left Germany. In 1952, Halina and George moved to Cleveland, and although she lived as an American for the next 50 years, her ties to her home country were never severed.

Halina served as an officer in the Polish American Congress, PAC, an umbrella organization of 3,000 Polish-American organizations and clubs. The PAC promotes civic, educational, and cultural programs designed to further not only the knowledge of Polish history, language, and culture, but also to stimulate Polish-American involvement in the United States. Additionally, Halina served as a member of the organization of Polish Veterans Combatants and the SPK Polish service organization.

While much of her new American life was dedicated to Polish causes, Halina was also a devoted mother and wife. She had a daughter and a son, who she raised while working for twenty years in the payroll department of Society National Bank.

Halina lived through one of the most harrowing events the world has ever seen. However, she did not let it overwhelm her. Rather, she courageously fought for her freedom and never gave up. Halina was awarded Poland's A.K. Cross and four other medals for her service in the Home Army. I offer my condolences to her entire family—especially to her husband George; their two children, Theresa and John; and their seven grandchildren.

Halina Grabowski was an amazing woman—we will never forget her.●

TRIBUTE TO BIRUTE SMETONA

● Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to

Birute Smetona—an exceptional woman and an exceptional Ohioan who passed away recently at the age of 91. Birute was a gifted musician, who lived a life of great courage and perseverance. She was a beloved figure and an inspiration to all who knew her in her Cleveland-area community.

Birute, born in Subacius, Lithuania, began her distinguished career as a concert pianist by soloing with the symphony orchestra in Kaunas—then the capital of Lithuania. She went on to graduate from the Lithuanian National Conservatory in 1935, where she met her future husband Julius, an athlete and an assistant law professor who was also the son of Lithuania's President Antanas Smetona. After the start of World War II, she had to leave a respected music conservatory in Paris to return to Lithuania with her husband and infant son, Anthony. During the trip, they sometimes had to get off their train and walk alongside because sections of track had been destroyed as a result of the War.

When they arrived in Lithuania, the Smetona family found their native land changed. Birute's life, which up until that point may have seemed like a modern-day fairy tale to some, was about to be thrown into a state of upheaval. Amidst the ever-present dangers of a war creeping closer and closer to home, Birute and her family made the difficult decision to leave Lithuania—the home they loved so dearly—in search of a better life.

Birute and her family left Lithuania in June 1940, just as the Soviet army was entering the country. While Russian troops initially stopped them at the border, they ultimately allowed them to pass into Germany. From there, the family was constantly on the move, living in Switzerland, France, Spain, and Brazil all in the space of a little over a year.

Eventually, Birute and her family arrived in Chicago in 1941, before finally settling in Cleveland, where Birute's husband found work as a factory laborer for just 65 cents an hour. The Smetona family was living on the second floor of a house on Ablewhite Avenue when a sudden fire consumed it. Tragically, Birute's father-in-law, the former President Smetona, lost his life in the blaze, unable to escape from where he lived in a converted attic on the floor above them.

These were difficult times for Birute and her family. After all that Birute and her family had been through—from having to leave their homeland of Lithuania to losing Julius's beloved father and having their home destroyed—Birute and her family started over yet again. As a testament to her strength of character, Birute endured at a point in her life when many others less determined and courageous than she would have crumbled under the sheer pressure of all the adversity her young family suddenly faced.

Birute held steadfast, however, and truly flourished in Euclid, Ohio. To

help support her family, Birute took buses for a time from her family's public housing in Euclid to homes in Shaker Heights to give piano lessons. But eventually, she was able to build a full schedule at her own home. She soon returned to the concert stage and went on to perform in major cities, including New York, Chicago, and Washington.

In Cleveland, she belonged to and performed for the Fortnightly, Cecilian, and Music and Drama clubs of Cleveland. While living in Cleveland Heights, Birute shared her gift with the community and taught for years at the Cleveland Music School Settlement and Ursuline College. Birute was also a visiting instructor at Youngstown State University, Appalachian State University, and the School of Fine Arts in Willoughby.

While known as a gifted performer, Birute Smetona was also a devoted mother and exceptional teacher. Her two surviving sons, Anthony of Cleveland Heights and V. Julius of Medina, both followed in their mother's footsteps to become concert pianists and teachers. Birute was dedicated to her students. She taught them to avoid a stiff appearance when playing by using a supple, flowing motion of hand, wrist, and forearm. Most of all, Birute was well known for her unique ability to clearly explain difficult musical concepts in a way that even children could understand.

Birute was a strong, courageous, and exceptionally talented mother, instructor, and pianist. She was a vibrant member of the Cleveland community, and I am proud to honor her life—a 91-year journey and adventure. I extend my condolences to her entire family—to her two sons, her nine grandchildren, and to all who knew and loved her. She will be truly missed, but will remain forever a testament to the character and depth of courage of the Lithuanian community in Ohio.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

H.R. 2799. An act making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes.